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# Furniture and Furnishings

## MARKEN HOMES.

By LAURA B. STARR.



THE peculiar grouping and coloring of the houses on Marken Island strike the visitor while yet he is crossing that arm of the Zuyder Zee which separates it from the mainland of Holland. The red, black and green one-story dwellings, perched high on piles, or artificial mounds, to protect them as far as possible from the perennial inundations to which they are subject, stand out in bold relief against both sea and sky.

Each house, or at least each group of two or three, is surrounded by a tiny moat, wherein is moored a small boat; this is the family carriage, and the only means of communication when the green meadow-lands are submerged; when the water

rises too high for safety within doors, then the whole population take to the boats, with provision to last until the subsidence of the water.

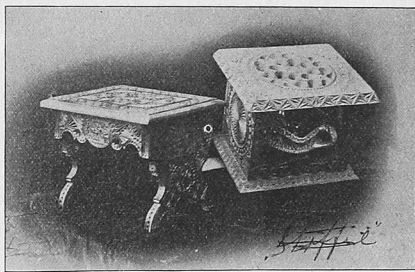
The marked individuality of the landscape; the long dikes covered with brilliant verdure which seem an inadequate protection to the little hamlets scattered over the low lying surface; the universal flatness that stretches away to meet the sky; the unbroken horizontal lines of earth, sky and water are but a few of the external characteristics, and are as nothing compared to the multiplicity of ornamental detail, the variety of articles, the juxtaposition of colors, that combine to make up the very striking interiors which charm the beholder with strong contrasts and delightful unexpectedness.

The houses are built of wood and roofed with red or black tile; the roofs are pointed and descend into very low eaves. The ground floor is one large space divided into as many rooms as the size of the family demands; many of them have but two, with a half partition dividing off a sort of entry or passage near the door; the cistern is usually found here and sometimes the larder; when there are any ceilings, they are low, but many of the rooms communicate direct with the roof which covers them.

Most of the modern houses boast of a fireplace and elaborate chimney-piece, but an old one I visited had no other provision for fire than a hole dug in the earth underneath the floor; this was bricked and covered with a little iron grating upon which rested a pot of beans stewing for the frugal dinner. There was a hole arranged in the farther end of the roof to let out the smoke, but it was contrary, and the smoke remained inside to half stifle the inmates.

When there is a chimney-piece it is made the centre of ornamentation; a short figured curtain is hung across it, and shelves and racks for china and earthenware are placed upon it. The cranes which are used are delightfully curious and quaint specimens of iron work, some of them very ornamental and artistic. Many rooms are painted blue, some are whitewashed, and I saw one with nearly all the furniture in the room painted a bright yellow.

Plates, plaques, jugs, pitchers, great drinking-glasses and silver mugs are scattered about in endless confusion, some on shelves, others in cupboards and racks,



STOOLS CARVED BY NATIVES.

and in some cases set up against the bare board. Much of the china is beautiful old Japanese ware brought from Nagasaki by the enterprising and courageous Dutch in the sixteenth century, when for a few decades they occupied the island of Deshima. Most of the articles belong to the best period of Japanese ceramics, when the artist and artisan were one, before the Island Empire had yielded to the demon of universal civilization, and become proud of its iron-clads and imported atrocities. Nothing like it is found in the market now. These tea-sets of egg-shell transparency, exquisitely colored and glazed, are most prized by all. Old Delft and other blue and white, which vainly tries

to imitate the old Japanese blue, rank next. The real Dutch collector will have nothing but blue ware, but these people are not collectors, in the proper sense of the word; they have simply kept all they have inherited or could acquire—in a word, all was fish that came to their nets, and, as might be expected, there are some unworthy pieces, but the majority of them are good.

The old drinking-glasses and huge tankards for beer, and the low brandy-bowls with handles on either side from which each wedding guest takes a sup of raisins and brandy with the dearest of archaic spoons, are enough to drive a collector mad with envy and rage, because these proud people will not for any amount of money part with the least of their cherished treasures. If the visitor go to them with a kindly and appreciative manner, they will open boxes and drawers and take great pleasure in displaying their hoarded possessions, but immediately a desire to buy is evinced, they begin putting them away, shake their heads, and gently say "Nay, nay."

In the long winter evenings, when there's nothing else to do, the men employ their idle hands in wood-carving, and decorate stools, chairs, laundry-boards, bellows, spoon-racks and pipe-cases with their handiwork. The old armoirs and presses, of which there is one in every house and sometimes two, are fine pieces of artistic work. They have neither schools nor teachers; carving is with them an inherited faculty, which has come down from father to son for centuries. And were it not for the interest which some philanthropists have taken in their work, the art would have died out ere this. Now there are a number of people interested in keeping the industry alive, and they have found a market, small, to be sure, but still something for the surplus of their work. The philanthropists serve a two-fold purpose in this: they first of all help these poor people to help themselves, and by so doing restore a national industry which had well-nigh become extinct.

The women revel in round and oval gaily painted boxes, in which they keep their caps and other finery. These are usually piled one above another in regular nests on the carved cabinet, which in several houses I saw was kept in an inner room, a sort of holy of holies, where only the most appreciative visitors were taken. The brass coffee-pots, copper kettles, brass warming-pans, and perforated fish-ladles are all hung about the room, and kept so well polished and free from dust that it would seem they were never used.

One old Salt who has a house full of curious and interesting things showed me a set of old Delft plates, each one numbered, with not a nick or crack in them. Others

bore quaint legends, like "Virtue is Life" and "Be Good and you Will be Happy," or

"Long may you live and happy may you be,  
Blest with contentment and from misfortune free."

The most curious one bore, in the centre, blue letters arranged in the given manner:

A  
H  
A K G W A  
S  
A

which, reading from the centre letter towards the four points of the compass, tells us that: "God hears all; God understands all; God sees all; God knows all."

The beds are perhaps the most curious arrangement in the whole house: they are built into a recess or cupboard in the wall, four or five feet high, with only a small opening in the centre, which is provided with a curtain to keep out the light and draughts; the great pillows covered with linen cases, worked in brown or black silk in cross-stitch embroidery. The designs are much the same, frequently symbolic of the fisherman's life. Across the partition at the foot of the bed is built a box, shaped like a feeding-trough, where the children sleep. The frequent overflow of water makes these high beds a necessity; they must be most uncomfortable things to get into or out of, even though a small step-ladder is provided.

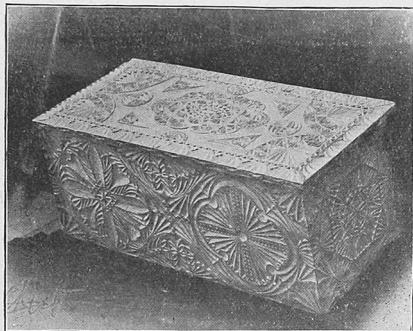
The footstool is universally used in Holland: no one thinks of offering a chair without

giving a stool as well. The kind commonly in use is a square box with a perforated top, and opening on one side to pass in a coarse clay bowl of smouldering peat: the gentle heat rising through the perforations keeps the body at a comfortable temperature; hundreds of them were piled up in the church entrances, and there are stores of them in every house. Some of those used in Marken show Biblical designs in wood carving and are very artistic indeed.

There are a variety of hibachis or braziers used, ranging in size from the tiny Delft one enclosing a night light to keep the tea hot, called "stoofie," to the large ornamental copper or brass one where peat is used to boil water for tea and coffee. There is always one or more in each room. The dainty blue tea-set, with a dear old silver shovel and cream spoon that hangs upon the edge of the bowl, has the place of honor on a small table in every house; by this table the "huisvrouw" sits and works and sips her tea, untroubled by any echoes of the



A MARKEN INTERIOR.



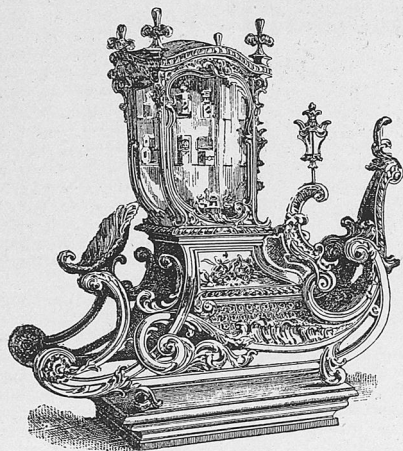
CHEST CARVED BY NATIVES.

distant world. A calm and placid life is hers, for the Calvinistic religion teaches her to repress all emotions, that she must not give way to great grief whenever sorrow or affliction falls to her lot, neither must she give herself up to overwhelming joy, even in the supreme moment of her life. Whatever is, is best, and she must accept the one with calm regrets, and take the other as an expression of kind Providence, not as anything which she herself merits.

#### DECORATIVE NOTES.

INSTEAD of having wall paper to match cretonnes, the newest style is to use the same chintz on the walls as the drapery. There are some lovely new chintzes, a revival of old glazed chintzes of our grandmothers' time, and this is hung directly on the walls instead of paper. These are in season all the year round. The color effects are brilliant in the extreme, and principally floral designs.

Very pretty reversible French tapestries (cotton) may be had in good colors and designs as low as sixty-nine cents, and a cheap grade of velours, new styles, for eighty-nine cents the yard.



A QUAINT CABINET.

#### SEEN IN THE SHOPS.

BY ELLEN DREW.



THE very newest thing in furniture is an experimental attempt to manufacture various articles from paper—compressed paper pulp. Lightness of weight will be its chief attraction. We have seen other articles of utility made from paper—articles, too, intended to contain water, like pails and infants' bathtubs. If these prove successful and satisfactory, why could not the same material be used for other pieces of furniture?

Some new Bagdad draperies of excellent harmonizing colors are embroidered on one or both sides. These are useful in so many ways that they are especially desirable. These mentioned measure fifty-four by one hundred and eighteen inches, and the more elaborate are from \$4.50 to \$6.00. Others are as low as \$3.50.

An imitation Bagdad, something entirely new, size fifty-four by one hundred and eight inches, is as cheap as \$1.50. These are guaranteed to wash, and, while not possessing the style of the genuine, have all the features of fabric and color.

The latest style in ladies' note paper is nearly square, to be folded twice. Colors are pale, delicate tints. The exquisite dainty colors, and this large square shape, are not yet introduced in the cheap grades.

A line of new carpets, of better quality, very rich in color. Very many had a full, deep, almost brilliant, blue for a background, with the pattern in contrasting though harmonizing shades of gold and golden browns. These combinations are strikingly effective. Others had similar patterns on crimson grounds, but this beautiful, new rich blue was preferable. The few samples seen were nearly all rather dark, especially a Royal Wilton, which consisted of several shades of a somewhat low tone of olive. A very little yellow at long intervals brightened this otherwise sombre floor covering. These subdued effects are, however, preferred as a foundation to the many-hued rugs. Very pretty moquettes only seventy-five cents per yard. Axminster, \$1.10, and a really handsome Wilton velvet, \$1.25. These were all of good quality.

A new Colonial bedstead seen lately was an exact representation of the style usually seen in brass, only the uprights were square instead of round. It was white enameled, embellished with gold.

A few specimens of new patterns in velvet material are chiefly large designs, and a combination of two or more shades of two harmonizing colors. One very pretty was a continuous series of olive green scrolls, with set floral figures introduced of a lovely soft shade of rose color. Price, \$2.50.

Some very attractive fret work is quite Moorish in design and shape, forming an arch instead of the straight across effect. From \$1.50 to \$2.00 per square foot.

A recent importation of all-silk portières discloses a graduated pattern, large at bottom and very small at top. These geometrical figures are several shades lighter than the ground. Finished with a fringe top and bottom. Colors are oak, rose, terra cotta, old gold and steel. Price, \$22.00 pair.

Another style of silk curtains has an all-over fret work, somewhat resembling the Battenberg lace. Only two colors as yet in stock, gold and olive. Price, \$16.00 per pair.